

PREVENTING WASTEFUL FEDERAL BOONDOGGLES

(Mr. DUNCAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, the Orlando Sentinel published a headline yesterday saying "Anger Over Courthouse Won't Die."

The anger concerns a proposed \$60,000,000 Federal courthouse in Orlando that the judges are unhappy with. I have been told by an expert that to build what the judges want could potentially double the cost and send several million dollars in architect's fees down the drain. At \$60 million, the building will already cost \$195 a square foot.

The cost is already too high. If costs explode because of spoiled judges, it will be far too expensive to build if we have any consideration at all for the poor taxpayers who are footing the bill.

Too many times we have allowed Federal judges to demand Taj Mahal-type courthouses because the money is not coming out of their pockets. Too often they have a taxpayers-be-damned attitude. The Commissioner for Public Buildings said, "The problem here is we have some judges who think they should be architects."

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, Hazardous Materials and Pipeline Transportation of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on which I served for 10 years will not let this project become another wasteful Federal boondoggle.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection and pursuant to clause 11 of rule X and clause 11 of rule I, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

Mr. CHAMBLISS of Georgia, to rank after Mr. BURR of North Carolina.

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

CONCERNS REGARDING EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, education is to be one of the new administration's top priorities, and I commend them for this. I would like to express

two major concerns I have in regard to education that I hope the President and Secretary Paige will take into consideration.

First, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL) and I started a Smaller Schools Initiative within the Department of Education. We were fortunate enough to secure \$45 million in funding for this program last year and \$125 million this year. This money is supposed to be for grants and assistance to school systems to help keep small schools open and/or reduce the size of some very large schools.

At a smaller school, a young person has a better chance to make a sports team, serve on the student council, lead a club, be a cheerleader or excel or stand out in some other way. Also a student at a smaller school can get more individual attention, and not just feel like a number in some education factory. Actually, very large high schools sometimes breed Columbine-type situations, because while 99.9 percent of students can handle big schools, a few always feel like they have to resort to strange or even dangerous behavior to get noticed.

Three or four years ago I read an article in the Christian Science Monitor saying that New York City's largest high school had 3,500 students, and then it was broken down into five separate schools and their drug and discipline problems went way down.

□ 1015

Augusta Kappner, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education wrote recently in USA Today that "good things happen" when large schools are remade into smaller ones. She said, "Incidents of violence are reduced; students' performance, attendance and graduation rates improve; disadvantaged students significantly outperform those in large schools on standardized tests; students of all social classes and races are treated more equitably; teachers, students and the local community prefer them."

Students are better off going to smaller schools even in older buildings, as long as they are clean and well lighted, than they are to very large centralized high schools even in brand-new buildings.

We have done a good job reducing class sizes in most places, but too often we are making a very bad mistake in making students go to very large schools.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the so-called teacher "shortage" is a special interest shortage aided by the government. We would have no shortage at all if we simply could give local school boards the flexibility to hire well-qualified teachers, even if they had never taken an education course. It makes no sense whatsoever to say that a Ph.D. chemist, for example, with many years experience in the field cannot be hired over a 22-year-old with a bachelor's degree simply because of a few education courses.

I realize that there are special interests which want to limit or restrict the pool of eligible applicants for teaching positions, but this is harmful to our children; and it will become even more harmful in the next few years if we allow this to continue. Local school boards, or preferably even principals at schools, should be allowed to hire the best-qualified teachers, even if they never took an education course. Many people are well qualified through advanced education and/or experience to teach, but the government, because of special interest pressure groups, will not allow them to be hired.

A few years ago, two small colleges in my district almost went under. Fortunately, neither one did. But it is ridiculous to say, for instance, that a Ph.D. political scientist or English professor with 20 or 25 years' teaching experience at the college level cannot teach in high school or even elementary school if their college went under just because they had not taken an education course. Local school boards should be allowed to consider an education degree as a real plus if everything else is basically equal. But they should not be forced to hire a less-qualified teacher simply because one spent more time studying and/or working in the subject they are to teach rather than taking a few education courses.

If local school officials were allowed to hire the most qualified person, even if they did not have an education degree, this artificial, government and special interest-induced teacher shortage could be wiped out very quickly; and most importantly, our children would get a better education. We should immediately give local school boards the authority to give alternative certification to people who are well qualified through education and/or experience in the field, even if they never took an education course.

The next time anyone says something about a teacher shortage, we should just say, remove the artificial, unjustified, harmful restrictions in the State law and this problem will be solved very quickly.

A TRIBUTE TO KAREN S. LORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe lost one of its most noble, most gifted, dedicated, effective, and kind members of our staff, Karen Lord, to the ravages of cancer on January 29 of this year. Karen was only 33—a heartwrenching tragedy for her family, and all of us who knew and loved her.

Since 1995, Karen has faithfully served as counsel for Freedom of Religion on the staff of the commission of which I serve as the cochairman. In